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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/ARP, AF/SPG, AF/E, AF/C,
NAIROBI FOR TRIMBLE

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TAGS: PREL PTER SO SU ER QA CD EG
SUBJECT: ARAB LEAGUE ON SUDAN AND SOMALIA

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
Donald A. Blome for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Key Points:

-- Zeid Al Sabban, African Affairs advisor to Arab League (AL) SYG Amre Moussa said that the recent meeting with A/S Carter and S/E Gration at the AU Summit was "very good." Moussa was upset by the allegation that Qatar was supporting the Somali Al Shibaab through funds given to the Government of Eritrea and he asked the Qatari Prince about the support. The Qatari Prince denied supporting Al Shibaab.

-- The AL views the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) as the "last chance" for the country. The League supports the USG decision to arm the TFG in the short term, but believes the long term goal should be a dialogue between all Somali parties.

-- According to Al Sabban, the SYG said the AL shares U.S. concerns on North-South issues and the upcoming Abyei border demarcation, and it views the "tripartite engagement" between the USG, SPLM and NCP as "only hope" for Sudan. However, unlike the USG, the League plans to make a push for the unity of Sudan.

-- The AL is concerned about the recent accord between the Umma Party and the JEM because it views the agreement as a "peaceful step toward regime change."

12. (C) Comment: Strong and vocal AL support for U.S. policies in Sudan and Somalia is welcome. During his speech at the AU Summit, Moussa praised President Obama and the role of U.S. numerous times. However, it is not clear what level of influence he brings to bear in either country. The AL speaks with all parties in Somalia, but we assess that its influence in Somalia is probably less than in Sudan. End Comment.

TFG May Represent Last Chance for Somalia

13. (C) Zeid Al Sabban told us on July 6 that the meeting with A/S Carter and S/E Gration on the margins of the AU Summit in Sirte, Libya was "very good". He stated that Moussa was "surprised and upset" by the U.S. assertion that Qatar was funding the Al Shibaab in Somalia through the Government of Eritrea. Moussa mentioned this to the Crown Prince of Qatar who denied that Qatar had any role in funding the Al Shibaab. The Arab League offered to arrange a meeting between U.S. officials and Qatari Prime Minister Hamad, or Minister of State for Political Affairs Ahmad Al Mahmoud to discuss the issue.

¶4. (C) Al Sabban told us that the AL pledged \$1 million to support the TFG at the meeting of the International Contact Group on Somalia in Rome. He said that the AL supports the USG decision to arm the TFG in the short term because it is concerned that if the TFG fails, "we will the chance to change Somalia for the better." However, the AL believes that the long term goal should be dialogue between the various Somali parties. Al Sabban said that support from other Arab countries for Somalia was not forthcoming because Riyadh has spent \$700 million on Somalia and "is fatigued." Egypt is also concerned, but does not appear to be interested in a joint Arab League/African Union initiative.

AL Supports U.S. Policy on Sudan; Concerned about the Future

¶5. (C) Al Sabban told us that SYG Moussa was happy to meet with S/E Gration and the SYG noted that the AL and USG positions on Sudan are "very close." He stated that the AL shares U.S. concerns on North-South issues and the upcoming Abyei border demarcation, but unlike the USG, it plans to make a "push for the unity of Sudan." According to Al Sabban, Moussa was struck by S/E Gration's comment that 85% of South Sudanese were illiterate and Moussa felt the AL needs to engage on the benefits of unity.

¶6. (C) Al Sabban told us that many "European countries" told the AL, during AU Summit, that they disagreed with the U.S. strategy in Sudan (NFI). However, he said that the AL views the "tripartite engagement" between the USG, SPLM and NCP as the "only hope" for Sudan. He said that U.S. engagement with the GoS was a step in the right direction. Al Sabban said the GoS was still cautious, but was engaged on the CPA and appreciative that it could talk to the USG. He opined that the SPLM has become unengaged on the CPA and he hoped that Washington's rapprochement with Khartoum will force the Government of South Sudan to lessen corruption and become responsible for development.

¶7. (C) Al Sabban said that there are still many problems on the horizon including the potential postponement of elections, the lack of a resolution in Darfur, the question of government legitimacy, and the indictment of President Bashir. All these issues make for a very difficult predicament. Al Sabban said that the AL was looking to work with the U.S. and others to find ways to ease the pressure on the GoS. He added that part of easing the pressure would be to postpone elections and rethink the referendum until the country was ready. Al Sabban told us that the AL was supportive of U.S. efforts to bring a ceasefire to Darfur. However, he said there was concern about uniting the efforts of Qatar, Libya, and Egypt to resolve the Darfur conflict because "all the eggs would be in one basket."

Umma-JEM Agreement: A Step Toward Regime Change

¶8. (C) Al Sabban said that the recent accord between the Umma Party and the JEM was a "significant political event" because it brings together one of the most important and traditional political parties and the strongest armed movement in Darfur. He said that the agreement's threat to declare the government illegitimate after July 9 is important because "unlike other Arab countries," Sudan's pluralistic society makes legitimacy important. Al Sabban opined that the agreement is "a peaceful step toward regime change" and he felt it strengthens the opposition movements. Al Sabban stated that the GoS registered its concern about the accord, and he asked the USG to encourage the JEM and the Government of Chad not to use this accord to escalate the violence in Darfur.

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